hundred artillerymen, and strangers were allowed beyond the rail. The Marquis of Anglesea having arrived, and inquired as to the arrangements, Mr. Phillips, the inventor, and his men, eight or nine in number, commenced operations. About five minutes after the light was set to the shavings, the lower front room was a mass of flame, and the glass giving way, it burst through the window: a medium-sized annihilator was then planted in front, and, from the increased quantity of smoke, it appeared to have some effect, and the flames burst out at the back. A second medium annihilator, ready steaming, was taken to that quarter; but either that the heat drove the men back, or that the steam would not rush against the wind, it was drawn off and brought to the front: its own steam was by this time half expended, and that of the first machine was nearly exhausted: the flames rushed furiously to the upper floors. Thereupon, a large horse annihilator was tapped, and with great difficulty moved across the soft uneven ground towards the burning house. Instead of calling for help to push up the steaming giant, the men attempted in vain to fix on a hose: it would not fit, and the forlorn hope, with its mouth turned obliquely to the leeward corner of the house, was left to waste its breath on the outside of the south brick wall, not one-tenth of the steam having entered the building. Thus was the fire left to burn on, and in about an hour, each floor, joist by joist, had fallen to the ground, and the whole was open to the sky.

No doubt, the mismanagement of this great trial was such as to leave the chief question uncertain; whether, with a body of flame equal to that created on this occasion, the fire-annihilator can be made efficient for its extinction. That it has great power in checking an incipient outbreak is sufficiently established; but in a case where the space occupied by the flame is very extended, and the inrush of air is wide and strong, it may be different. It is very sad to see an object of such interest to the public committed to persons who, year after year, mar every opportunity of deciding the question.

F.

IMPROVEMENT OF HOUSES FOR THE POOR.

ALTHOUGH it is now ascertained that dwellings for the industrious classes can be provided at a remunerative outlay, yet it cannot be hoped that new buildings for this purpose will be erected to any considerable extent, or at most, not in sufficient number to accommodate any great proportion of these classes: it seems, therefore, well worth consideration whether old lodging-houses might not be much improved, and become nearly on a par with even the best model lodging-houses. In utilising old houses, the farther advantages would be gained, too, of turning to good account the capital sunk for their construction, and of doing away with the retreats they now afford for filth, disease, and crime.

Supposing the new dwellings for the industrious classes to be taken as models, and the old houses to be operated upon to be a number of contiguous houses, the property of one landlord, the whole block might be converted into a single establishment, similar to a model lodging-house. In effecting such an improvement, the first alteration that presents itself is the doing away with all internal staircases; and, instead, to give access to the several lodgings by means of one external staircase, communicating with an external gallery along the front of each floor, so that entrance to the several apartments would be from these galleries. On this plan the place of existing staircases would be converted into rooms: a window of each front room would be made an entrance door. Where there are front and back rooms, the back one would be entered from that in front. Where more than two rooms were required for the same family, an additional one might be afforded where the old staircase had been. If, on the contrary, single rooms only were wanted, galleries similar to those in front might be constructed at the backs of houses, to give access to back rooms. It may be objected to this arrangement, that the stairs would be often wet and muddy; but, on the contrary, they would more easily be kept clean than internal stairs, when common to many families, and much sweeter, if exposed to the external air, than when shut up in the interior of a building; besides which, as by the projected alterations lodgers would be provided with water in each apartment, they would have less frequent occasion than at present to go up and down the stairs.

The advantages of thus insulating, as it were, each separate dwelling, are considerable. By means of it privacy is as well secured as though the entrance to each habitation were direct from the street. In point of salubrity, this mode does away danger of contagion, often so fatally experienced where access to different dwellings is from one and the same internal staircase, and it removes the source of many a squabble amongst lodgers and their children, so often originating in misuse of the stairs.

In remodelling old houses, back yards, those sources of stench and filth, should be done away, the walls that divide them be taken down, dust heaps and all petty erections entirely destroyed: this done, a convenient site would be obtained for dining and coffee-rooms, communicating with existing rooms on the parlour floor. The new building needing to be only one story high, might be lighted by a skylight, or rather lantern windows. The existing parlours might some of them become reading or work rooms, and where required as a library, be suitably fitted up with book shelves. The basement rooms would suit for kitchen, bath, laundry, and stores, as also for apparatus for lighting, warming, and ventilating the whole establishment; or, if not sufficient for these purposes, a kitchen might be made under the coffee-room. Water would of course be laid on to each apartment, and means provided also for conveying soiled water away. Dust shafts and closets would be conveniently situated at the ends of each gallery. The closets at one end for men, at the other for women,—for small dwellings a more wholesome arrangement, all things considered, than where such conveniences are provided within the apartments themselves.

The dirty state of most old houses might seem an insuperable objection to this project, particularly as regards insects. Insects, however, may be effectually got rid of by the simple application of a wash of sulphate of copper: old houses greatly infected by bugs have been made habitable by means of such a wash. After pulling down worn paper hangings, old wainscoting and skirtings, the sulphate of copper should be applied in a strong solution to walls, ceilings, and floors, so as to soak their entire surfaces, and enter into crevices. Skirting boards, after having been so treated, might be replaced.

It is evident that a project of this nature would, in each case, need modification as to details, so as to suit them to particulars of each block of buildings to be improved; but the general idea once started, may lead to good contrivances, for converting even the worst of the present old lodging-houses into wholesome and creditable abodes: indeed, it seems no inconsiderable motive for the adoption of such a plan, that thereby existing dens of disease and immorality would become sane habitations, inducing self-respect and worthiness, instead of leading to habits of dirt and crime.

M. B.

IMPROVEMENT OF PALL MALL AND THE PARKS.

THE MARBLE ARCH.

So long has this monument of official indecision stood an eyesore and obstruction to the palace, that it has been the theme of general commentary; and as it fairly occupies the province of THE BUILDER, one more allusion to its allocation may not be out of place, even although the new site has been predetermined,—as a looker-on at the roulette-table cannot forbear to speculate on the possible turn-up of the ball, despite the acknowledged fact that the rigger will decide the colour against the heaviest stakes.

It was before urged that, to complete Buckingham Palace, the first postulate is a grand approach, or causeway, and the conversion of the present unsightly and useless arena, or mall, of forty acres, into a shrubbed and verdant English garden, reserving a causeway for royal use through *one only* of the five timber-lined avenues which at present occupy that noble and stately extent of gravelled road.

As the Mall, which was used for a public promenade in the time of the Charleses, has long ceased to be so enjoyed by the Londoners, and as it faces full the palace, no other mode of conversion could meet the approval of any landscape gardener.

But there is a stronger reason for embellishing this wide-spreading russet-waste of gravel, in the far more utilitarian approach which might lead to the courts of royalty, through Pall Mall, in a direct line from St. Martin's Church, and which would strike out about halfway between the palace and the triumphal arch, forming a route nearly direct to Hyde-park, *without a hill*.

Such an arrangement would imply the incorporation of the two parks, the abatement of the iron railings, and their transfer to the proposed new esplanade, leaving a suitable width for foot passengers; and at any given point between Stafford House and Constitution-hill, to place the marble arch in such a position as should be visible from Pall Mall, and unobstructive of the view from one or the other of the aforesaid houses, or the palace.

The founding of a triumphal arch in juxtaposition with any other building is a solecism. Those of Titus and Severus were placed in the Campus Martius at Rome, and were then distant from other objects of conflicting grandeur. The Parisians have their Champs de Mars. It is needless to point out the isolation of their magnificent Arc de l'Etoile, or the stately simplicity and unity in design of their statues and fountains. Here we have no Boulevard, no grand avenue; and although in street improvements (as Oxford-street) the municipal authorities are amending their ways, as yet the Woods and Forests are slumbering under the narrowed shadows of antiquity.

If a graceful and commodious thoroughfare can be formed at a small cost, equally useful to the public and royalty, but, above all, essential to the perfect ornamentation of the parks and the palace, should the purchase of only ten houses be an insuperable barrier? There are but two which fall direct in the proposed opening, and those in one stack between Stafford and Ellesmere Houses,—the latter being a most creditable specimen of domestic architecture: the other eight houses are on the north side of Cleveland-row (including the corner house of St. James's-street), and are essential to the widening of a grand place opposite St. James's Palace, as well as to an uninterrupted vista from the National Gallery.

In such an avenue the best position for the arch would perhaps be intermediate, *in the line* between Stafford House and Constitution-hill; and, from the arch, one route might diverge towards the palace, the other towards the triumphal arch; or a large, conducting either way, would serve without macadamizing acres of verdure.

Without alluding to the express merits of the marble design, or to the origin and intent of triumphal arches, which, in latter days, if they perpetuate anything, it is only the triumph or the disgrace of the structure itself and the artificer thereof, I would again press on the authorities the occasion which is now open to them for a great metropolitan, and, therefore, national improvement,—an improvement which, if it were only for the use of private carriages, would greatly solace the public with an intra-urban promenade, disencumber the *stunning* and eternal traffic of Piccadilly, give dignity to the most noble range of London (Pall-mall), and satisfaction to the peripatetics and rising generation who now in crowds, and not ungratefully, enjoy the floral *enceinte* of the *Morpeth* (let me so call them) Gardens in St. James-park.

From the numerous allusions in the press to this subject, the feeling of the public is manifest that they expect the *marbles*, as they cannot have the *money*, back again; and an improving taste for the arts renders it imperative on officials that no freak of Gothism shall reconstruct the costly memorial on an untoward site. A nation may pass under the yoke of its own erection and choice with complacency, while the onerous and wayward imposition of an arch job might superinduce heaviness or bitterness.

QUONDAM.

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